

# Toast of the Coast

By Stephan MACLEOD



The Squatters lead a singalong of *Mama Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up to be Cowboys*.

Sydney's Slowcoaster and Rock Ranger have left a strong impression on the Charlottetown, late-night party scene by transporting their unique brand of spontaneous living-room jam sessions and alcohol-fueled insanity from Cape Breton to PEI whenever they come to town. When Pat Deighan and Dennis Ellsworth decided to invite both bands back to Charlottetown along with their hillbilly supergroup, The Squatters, they were more concerned with the opportunity to party and hang out with the musicians than actually seeing them perform in concert. The fact that they were also going to play at Baba's was an added bonus to the planned weekend of drinking and antics.

A festival seemed to evolve naturally out of Pat and Dennis' initial plans to bring the House of Rock (Slowcoaster, Rock Ranger, The Squatters) to PEI. There was no shortage of local talent and other artists from Atlantic Canada to fill four days of music. With a list of bands, a venue, and some sponsorship money to cover their asses, *Close to the Coast* was created as a musical showcase for East Coast talent in the same vein as the ECMA *No-Cases* that took place at Baba's Lounge this February.

## THURSDAY:

Rock Ranger and Slowcoaster arrived at my place Thursday evening. I was in the process of fixing a fucked-up computer for my little sister. I got so involved in pretending I knew how to install a CD-ROM that I almost forgot about the whole music festival. I may have also forgotten to tell my mom that two and a half bands were staying in our livingroom this weekend. I thought she was going away this weekend anyway, so I didn't think it would be necessary to worry her about the smelly musicians sleeping on our couches and floor. Last time they stayed here, an awful lot of sand was left behind from an early morning dip at the beach.

Rock Ranger hit the stage at Baba's around 12:30 and screamed their way through a ferocious rock and roll set. Since the bar had to close at 2:00, Slowcoaster did not have much time for their set, but they managed to fill the little amount of time that they had with a virtually non-stop whirlwind of wordy funk, kicking into a jam they dubbed the Fifteen Minute Dance Party which could have gone on all night if it wasn't for pesky liquor commission regulations.

## FRIDAY

On Friday afternoon, Dennis threw a pool party at his parent's place for the bands. The Cape Bretoners took a few belly-flops, threw footballs, and jostled with pool noodles before dining on barbecued hamburgers, hot dogs, and veggie dogs. The get-together eventually deteriorated into a discussion about Marjorie Wilson's lawn and garden segments from CBC Radio's *Maritime Noon*.

Later that night at Baba's, Newfoundland chanteuse Colleen Power delivered a whopping set of songs that ranged in topics from guys that wear novelty t-shirts ("His shirt said zero to horny in six beers") to guys that are selfish in relationships ("You never gave me dick all."). For her last song, she invited The Squatters on stage to join her. In a matter of minutes, seven guys in costume were up plucking away on guitars, banjo, and mandolin. A ho-down was inevitable. Colleen stayed with The Squatters for a couple of sing-alongs.

When The Squatters play, members of Slowcoaster and Rock Ranger are transformed into a wild bunch of heavy drinking cow-punks. Although they take on the personas of crazy, inbred, country hicks, the characters they play are not too far from their actual personalities. Preacher Bill Bribes, Junior, Dr Love Jones, Rollie Butts, Jebeodiah, Paco, and the Bear get wasted, spit beer, and share the same love for old country music as Steven, Dave, Mikey, Jay, Devon, Ian, and Mike. The highlight of their set was an encore that featured everyone singing along to "Mama Don't Let



Ruth Minnikin and Matt Mays of The Guthries